

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Digital Repository

Volume 25 | Issue 2

Article 3

1962

Three-Year Professional Curriculum

Ray Sis

Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian



Part of the [Veterinary Medicine Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sis, Ray (1962) "Three-Year Professional Curriculum," *Iowa State University Veterinarian*: Vol. 25 : Iss. 2 , Article 3.

Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian/vol25/iss2/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Iowa State University Veterinarian by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Three-year Professional Curriculum

Ray Sis, D.V.M., M.S.

The Veterinarian today must have both a liberal and a professional education to cope with the complexities of the modern world. Possibly the greatest single impediment to a liberal and professional education is the length of time required under the traditional calendar. The future veterinarian has eight years of obligations, including military service, after he finishes high school.

There are roughly around 22,000 veterinarians in the United States today.⁵ A recent government report estimates that North America will need 47,250 veterinarians by 1980.¹

Acknowledging these facts the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University should: (1) increase enrollment and staff by at least $\frac{1}{3}$ (2) reduce the calendar years invested by the student.

This action would involve more than a mechanical manipulation of dates and weeks into a tidy schedule. For us this new plan could be a means of reappraising our veterinary educational program

and meeting the needs brought about by the advent of nuclear medicine and technological advancement.

The origins of some of the time honored practices in higher education do not tend to strengthen our confidence in these practices.⁸ The Saturday Review reports that the main reason for the four-year college course today is that Harvard adopted it in 1636 (324 years ago). Harvard adopted it because Cambridge and Oxford had it. Oxford adopted it because English parents who had been sending their sons to Paris, to study informally, decided some years earlier that four years of university study . . . would be a reasonable length of time to stay away from home. In this careful, studied, scientific fashion we have concluded that four years constitutes a complete college education.

A report⁸ from 19 states, entitled "The Colleges Plan for a Decade Ahead", stated the following:

(1) Faculty shortages will be acute. This will result in larger classes, more instruction by television, more independent study, and more credit by examination without class attendance.

* Dr. Sis is an instructor in the Department of Veterinary Anatomy at Iowa State University.

(2) A much larger proportion of the national income will flow into higher education.

(3) More colleges will operate on a year-round basis and many students will complete work for a college degree in 3 years instead of 4.

Year-round Operation

The colleges and universities that have inaugurated a plan of year-round operation have used one of two calendars: the quarter plan or the trimester plan. The former involves the use of four quarters between 10 to 12 weeks each, the later involves three periods of 14 to 15 weeks each.

Year-round operation is not an entirely new idea. It was tried during both world wars by a number of universities. The programs were essentially "speed up" plans, and reactions of faculties in general were unfavorable. However, the time schedules were demanding and the load on the faculty and students was unusually heavy.

The reports recommending year-round operation usually are couched in terms of the educational advantages — the opportunity for students to accelerate, the opportunity to introduce new ideas, the advantage of integrating the summer session with a regular program of instruction, the advantages to graduate students pursuing research year-round, having more faculty available during the summer, and the need for more facilities. Aware of the rapid increase in enrollments, institutions have become discouraged at the prospect of securing the funds with which to provide all of the physical plant that will be needed.

It seems clear that year-round operation would enable the university to make more effective use of facilities and accommodate additional students. Higher education must utilize what it has before it turns to its friends, legislative or otherwise, for additional support.

Philip Coombs of the Ford Foundation reports that colleges "use their available classrooms at only 46% of capacity and their laboratories at only 38% of capacity"

at a time when they are rightly alarmed about the shortage of space.

Thirty-five per cent of our budgets are with us whether we operate on a nine-month or a twelve-month basis. Libraries, debt service, building maintenance, and a substantial part of our administrative costs continue whether we are "open for business" or not.⁷

A college that is on the semester plan without a summer session, by introducing a full semester and by controlling its enrollments, can increase its services to students by 50 per cent.⁴ President Grayson Kirk of Columbia University, writing in the *Saturday Evening Post*, March 26, 1960, estimated that Columbia would be able to secure a 33 per cent increase in tuition revenue, which implied a similar increase in student-semester enrollments.

A committee at the University of Michigan estimated that a full year operation would increase the enrollment significantly. To achieve these results, however, the institution must have sufficient applications for admission and be able to require the students to attend in such periods as will enable the institution to make full use of its facilities.

These results may be achieved very easily in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University because the freshmen students are admitted only once each year. They may preregister for the entire three years because there are no electives in the curriculum (with the exception of students on the honors program). There are a favorable amount of applications for admissions. In 1962 the applicants at Iowa State University increased 30% over 1961. At the present time there are several applicants for each available position.

The A & M College of Texas will begin in 1963, to "phase in" a trimester program which will produce veterinary graduates in three years of professional training instead of four.⁶ The *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* reports that this will be the first major change in veterinary education since adoption of the two-year preveterinary requirement.²

Proposal for College of Veterinary Medicine At I.S.U.

It appears that the College of Veterinary Medicine, at Iowa State University, can most efficiently change to a year-round operation by continuing the quarter plan. The 3 month vacation would be replaced with a full quarter of school and one month of vacation. The school term would begin with the summer school session and close with the spring session. The quarter system has the following important advantages over the trimester system (see editorial, April 15, 1962, J.A.V.M.A. p. 825).

1. Students will graduate at the usual time, in the spring, and therefore can compete for jobs with other spring graduates.
2. Licensing examinations can begin at the traditional time in June each year.
3. The scheduling of service courses can remain the same.
4. Student's time investment is 2½ months less.
5. Examinations would not have to be held at unorthodox hours.
6. A major adjustment of courses and curriculum would not be involved.
7. Selected students may continue with the honors program.

Controversial Disadvantages

The disadvantage of a year-round program most frequently mentioned is the possibility of student "burn out". This can also occur under the present four-year system. If proper environment and good teaching methods are employed in the classroom, student "burn out" should not be a problem.

Another disadvantage is that many students need to work during the summer to meet expenses the following year. However fellowships and loans without interest are available for these students. The part time work while attending school could remain as it is in the present program.

Many third year students, prior to their fourth year, acquire a job with a practicing veterinarian. These jobs provide some

clinical experience and may or may not involve formal supervision. Such jobs, however, are often criticized on the basis that the quality of the training, supervision, and facilities vary greatly; that the students are often used for menial tasks, not especially of educational benefit. Because of the many phases of veterinary medicine, the value of the summer job is questionable. Also, for a veterinarian who intends to make a career in the Armed Forces, teaching, or other highly specialized work, it is to his advantage to start a regular income insufficient to meet the family needs as soon as possible.³

There would be less time for the student to mature under the influences and guidance of his professors. Nevertheless, the veterinary student would still have one more year to mature than the average college student. Graduates must be ready to take their places in society at an increasingly early age and the colleges and universities must correlate the learning process with the process of maturing. Physiologists have learned much about the age at which human beings mature. It is known that physical development is complete, emotional patterns are fairly well set, adjustment to society can be made, and a person can be ready to begin living as an independent adult human being at the age of twenty or twenty-one. This age marks the beginning of a span of ten years or more during which the individual has maximum amounts of physical drive, energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. It is essential for young people to complete their education and to begin their careers as early as possible in this period of greatest value to themselves, and, in turn, to society.⁷

Classrooms and laboratories would have to be air-conditioned for use during the summer months. Many classrooms and laboratories are presently air-conditioned. The air-conditioning of the entire facility would be an asset.

Still another problem encountered is that of arranging appropriate work loads and compensation for the faculty. There would be a shortage of faculty; however, the problem of shortages is going to remain in any case. When faculty members

are needed to work several successive periods, substantial salary increases should be in order. Schedules and courses could be adopted to prevent the faculty from teaching more than a given number of successive periods. This would allow frequent periods for refreshment, studies and research. For some there would be the advantage of taking two consecutive periods for travel, research, foreign service, and so forth. The plan of year-round operation, as such, should not require the individual faculty member to overwork, there should be very little extra duty on the part of the professor.

The faculty at the University of Pittsburgh is enjoying over a thirty per cent increase in salary. The year-round plan at their school is allowing longer periods for research than the semester plan had afforded them.

Advantages

Several advantages of the three-year program over the present four-year program have already been mentioned. The saving in total time invested by the student is one advantage. The Texas A & M Veterinary School has recognized that the graduate is provided with an additional year of professional productivity and the public with an additional year of professional service without additional investment by either.² The three-year plan should attract more prospective veterinary students and interest more students in post-doctoral training.

It seems clear that the year-round operation would enable the university to make more effective use of facilities. This should appeal to the legislature and public, thereby, increasing their support.

Clinical cases submitted to the Stange Memorial Veterinary Clinic during the summer months could be utilized in the teaching program. Some of these are diseases restricted to the summer months which students do not see during the regular academic year.

A schedule would be necessary for phasing out the four-year program and phasing in a three-year system, the graduation of two classes in one year would be neces-

sary in preparation for entry into the three-year system.

A possible solution would be the acceptance of classes of 50 each in 1963 and 1964 making the 1967 graduating class a total of 100 if the new program would get underway in the summer session of 1964. The lighter workload, brought about by the smaller classes entering in 1963 and 1964, would allow time for obtaining additional faculty, reappraisal of the curriculum, and improving the content of the major fields. Classes of 100 each could be admitted in 1965 and each year thereafter. A summary is made for clarification.

Class Entering	Number Entered	Graduation Date	Number of Possible Graduates
1961	70	1965	70
1962	72	1966	72
1963	50	1967	100
1964	50	1967	
1965	100	1968	100
1966	100	1969	100

Progress is always accompanied by change, however tradition that has been with us for years is not easily changed. The transition to the year-round operation might not be an easy one for the students and faculty. Most of us do not want to tamper with educational practices with which we have long been accustomed. But the year-round operation is feasible and the new plan can be initiated if we want to serve our students, profession and society with maximum effectiveness.

REFERENCES

1. Dimensions of Veterinary Medicine in the United States 1962. Veterinary PR Roundup 6 (1): 1-4.
2. Editorial 1962. More Veterinarians in Fewer Years. J.A.V.M.A. 140: 825-826.
3. Editorial 1962. Veterinary Internships Considered. J.A.V.M.A. 140: 1021-1022.
4. Henderson, A. G. 1962. A Critical Look at Year-Round Operations of Institutions. Current Issues In Higher Education. 161-164.
5. Herrick, J. B. 1962. How the Practitioner Can Adjust to the Changes in Agriculture. Vet. Med. 57: 306-310.
6. Price, D. A. 1962. Interns, externs, preceptees. J.A.V.M.A. 141: 728-730.
7. Rankin, Alan C. 1961. The Trimester Plan of the University of Pittsburgh. Current Issues In Higher Education. 167-170.
8. Umbeck, S. G. 1961. Why Colleges Take Four Years. Saturday Review. 44: 78.